# MAVERICK

## CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

# Chris Thile & Michael Daves SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN

Dazzling and dizzying a fabulous introduction to

Chris Thile will be a familiar name to readers of Maverick either from his days as the teenage virtuoso mandolinist from Grammy-winning Nickel Creek, or more recently from the challenging, classical influenced bluegrass of the Punch Brothers. Michael Daves meanwhile



may be lesser-known in comparison. But having gigs with Steve Martin, Tony Trishka and Rosanne Cash under his belt, he certainly has the right credentials

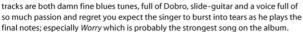
SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN is an album of traditional bluegrass songs from the likes of Flatt & Scruggs, the Louvin Brothers and Monroe Brothers. Note the brotherly theme here: male harmony vocals tighter than a gnat's you-know what are the golden thread weaving through this selection. Thile's mandolin is, of course, typically playful, precise and dizzying in its dexterity while Daves' guitar chops give multi rhythmic, type-writer-like crunches. And while many of the standout tracks are those performed at the speed of a free-falling rollercoaster (Tennessee Blues), or a Benny Hill soundtrack on fast forward (Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms), when they slow down to catch a breath, for example on the sorrowful Rain And Snow, or the mellifluous Bury Me Beneath The Willow, the real beauty of their performance is on show. Helen Keen www.nonesuch.com

### Kris Dollimore NO GHOSTS IN THIS HOUSE

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Got dem Cornish blues: Mama

After listening to the album four times I had absolutely no idea where in the world Kris Dolimore came from, so I Googled him and lo and behold he's not only English but who'd have thought that a pure-bred Cornishman could sing and play the blues as well as this? The opening two



Track four Dias de los Meurtos (Days Of The Dead?) took me by surprise as it is not only a gorgeous classical Spanish instrumental but couldn't be more out of place if it was a punk rock song. Hush is a really cool feedback-enhanced Chicago blues in the style of Howling Wolf but without the rasp to the voice. The two-part instrumental Homage To Blind Joe Death took me back to my teens and reminded me of the acoustic stuff that Rory Gallagher occasionally blessed the World with—and it's nearly as good. Khamaj which follows sounds like something George Harrison would have done in his East meets West phase and it's just as forgettable. NO GHOSTS IN THE HOUSE ends with another cool blues; The Last Dance which tips a wink in Chris Rea's direction; and like the Rory Gallagher reference earlier this is meant with great affection from a fan of both guitarists. Alan Harrison www.krisdollimore.com

#### Little Green **INNOCENT AGAIN** Paraply Records

Sweden's Little Green find their musical feet in a countryrock backbeat

The Swedish-based country music quartet kick off INNOCENT AGAIN with the urgent and upbeat, weekend themed Time 'Til Monday. The foregoing title features a repeating guitar riff that's straight out of the Searchers



songbook ala the 1960s. David Odlow delivers great sounding country fiddle on For A While, while Kimmie Rhodes adds a harmony vocal to the waltz-paced album title track. Elsewhere on this collection, there are guest harmony vocal contributions from Shooter Jennings bassist/solo artist Ted Russell Kamp and individual duet appearances by Keith Miles (I Can Talk Again) and Lisa Pederson (This Is Our Life). Founding member Thomas Ponten penned the autobiographical Upside Down, wherein he recalls his life after his father left his mother when Thomas was aged three. Settling for an electric country-rock sound on INNOCENT AGAIN, their pleasant but hardly earth-shattering third outing features eleven band-composed originals. The album hints at Little Green's early folk/bluegrass influences, although the quartet's main strength lies in the accomplished harmony vocals of Ponten and cofounder Andreas Johannesson. Arthur Wood. http://www.littlegreen.se/

#### Lleuwen TAN

Gwymon CD014

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A listening experience you will never forget...

Lleuwen Steffan is a Welsh folk singer-songwriter, best known for fusing together traditional Welsh folk and jazz stylings. Vocally, Lleuwen has been classically trained, but as a child having discovered the likes of Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald, these early influences have had a



massive affect on her musical personality. She also studied the songs of Joni Mitchell and James Taylor, alongside the ancient Welsh poetic tradition. Her unique lyrical compositions are beautiful and intelligent, whilst being wistfully mysterious to the English listener. At the age of seventeen, in 1998 Lleuwen's first single was released and received extensive airplay which fuelled her love for music, eventually taking her to the Central College in America where she studied jazz. Returning home, Lleuwen then helped found the Gwynedd-based band Acoustique featuring jazz tunes sung in Welsh, English, French, German and Portuguese.

TAN is a collection of twelve self-penned tracks and original compositions, which differs from a lot of the work she has done in the past that involved interpretations of other's songs or traditional arrangements. Though every song is sung in Welsh the  $over all\ tone\ of\ the\ record\ is\ full-bodied,\ vibrant\ and\ moving,\ and\ although\ you\ don't$ necessarily understand the spoken word, you fully connect with the soulful style and intelligent compositions. Also the CD booklet does come with a translation of every song title and the occasional chorus or verse so that you can access that side of the lyrical content. The songs are exciting and opening with Lle Wyt Ti Heno lesu Grist? (Translation: Where Are You Jesus Christ?) the song is a clever take on the story of Christ from his family's point of view: 'Sorry for not keeping in touch as much as we used to but you never answer or reply to our calls so we guess you're busy. Hope all is well in your world. Still the same here, still trying to fix those bloody holes in the living  $room.'\, The\, second\, track\, titled\, \textit{Mi Wela'i Efo Fy Llygad Bach I (Translation: I \,spy\, with}$ my little eye something beginning with... u) is beautiful, completely mesmerising and wonderfully sung with such intense passion and movement, that you become a part of it. Also instrumentally, it's slightly more sparse and seems to revel in the acoustics of the track and the subtle elements of progression and atmosphere. Cawell Fach y Galon (Translation: Heart Shaped Cage) is a beautiful song of love, and a woman keeping her heart open to love and open to the hurt love can bring. 'In his eye there is a bird, in that bird there is a song, in that song there is a longing. And the bird who flies through skies of longing flies straight into the cage of a woman's heart."

This is an extraordinary record; all instruments including guitars, doublebass, ukelele, harp, bongos, flute and some other sounds you may find in there such as cups, sieve, salad bowl, marbles, kitten heels, brushes, sticks, car keys and clicks have all been played by Lleuwen and her right-hand man on this record Vincent Guerin, who also co-produced the record. It just really does stand out from the rest and is well worth an intense listen—it's an experience you'll never forget!! Laura Bethell www.myspace.com/lleuwen

# **Louise Orfila** THAT GIRL AMCDLO1

With time and life experience Louise Orfila is sure to make a fine English country music artist...

Louise Orfila started writing songs at the age of thirteen, when she caught the writing bug following a songwriting competition at school in honour of the First World War. Louise's debut record PIECE OF THE PUZZLE in 2008 led

her to join the Blackfish Academy of Performing Arts. Now aged eighteen, Louise continues to perform in East Kent, has been chosen as a Kent County Council model for young people in Kent, and has appeared on local radio stations. She currently studies music.

This record is Louise's second full-length album, and although it's a moving attempt at country influenced songwriting, the songs are all focused on the complications of love in life. Opening with Watch Me Now (That Girl) it's a strong, showcasing Louise's style that creates balladry in her power vocal choruses, whilst the song's build up and break down as emotions fly, and in that she truly discovers the passion of songwriting. References can be drawn to the likes of Emma King & the Heartsets, in her vocal style and big country-pop band sound. Lucky Day opens a bit more stripped back and gives more space to really enjoy the lyrical content as well as the harmonising and steel guitar. While her style is country-rock, her lyrical story-telling is sweet and punctuated by a rock-chick edge. *Hey Baby* is a sweet and enjoyable song, that really discovers a pop edge while exploring good times gone by. Overall it's a good release, harnessing some average songs punctuated by the odd standout track like Falling—with more time and life experiences Louise Orfila is sure to make a fine English country music artist. Laura Bethell www.louise-orfila.com

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